

What Will Enfranchised Woman Do With Leap Year?

An Inquiry Into What May Be Expected in the Future

ONCE again the happy season is at hand when it is man's (calendar) privilege to lean back comfortably in his armchair and to address in this manner the anxious, shy and highly agitated woman kneeling before him:

"All right. Go ahead and ask me, and maybe I'll marry you."

But will she ask him? Even if he adopts a less standoffish attitude, giving her every encouragement possible, will she do it? Moreover, having decided to ask him, what is her best way of going about it?

As each Leap Year approaches there have always been problems, and there are again problems this time. It is freely admitted on all sides that never in their history have women been so favorably placed for taking a more aggressive attitude in matters of courtship and matrimony as to-day, but it is also conceded, with equal unanimity, that the way of going about it is just as complicated as usual.

What, therefore, are the women going to do in the season beginning next month and ending a full year hence? Will they take advantage of the hard-won privilege gained for them by St. Bridget on the shores of Lough Neagh, so many centuries ago, or will they again be reduced to the necessity of employing the "wiles by indirection" of which Bernard Shaw complained so bitterly in his book?

What are the women going to do this coming year?

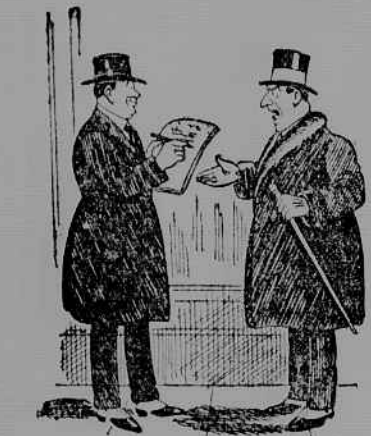
A cautious and a careful survey—it had to be cautious and careful for reasons which will appear later—seems to indicate that there is a growing conviction in many quarters that if they ever intend actually to take advantage of their Leap Year opportunities the time for them to do it is now.

In the first place, they have never enjoyed such complete "emancipation" politically and economically. They not only have the vote in a majority of the states, but about 30 per cent more than ever before are self-supporting. In a greater degree than in their history, too, they are on an "equal basis" with the men in the United States in earning capacity. The war, especially, was a great boon to them, and women are now employed in many fields in which they never were seen before. Moreover, it is contended, in many instances, they and not the men hold the "paying jobs," and are, therefore, in a better position than the males to take the initiative in proposing matrimony.

But will they do it?

Object to Being Quoted

In making an investigation with a view to offering a conservative forecast of what may be expected in 1920, a surprising amount of reticence was encountered among per-



"I've always done my own proposing"

sons who might be expected to speak with authority on the subject. This unwillingness to go on record was found among the well as well as those still in a state of single blessedness.

"If you ask me what I think of women proposing as a general proposition," said one well known suffragist who is still single, "I can only call your attention to the mess a great many men have made of marriage, and ask you if women could do any worse if they did the choosing. But if you want to know what I—well—" The sentence ended there, and there was something in the general atmosphere which indicated that it would not only be futile but highly injudicious to press the inquiry further along that line.

When the question of what they thought of women proposing was put up to certain married men, they either replied with what seemed unreasonable heat that they'd like the inquirer to understand that they had always done their "own proposing," and were masters in their own household, or they excused themselves on the plea of pressing busi-

ness. Some married women replied with what seemed equal unreasonableness that they'd "like to see themselves chasing any man," although in no case was there a suggestion on the part of the investigator that their marriage was the result of anything but the conventional courtship.

The complicated character of the whole problem is still further emphasized by the scant progress that has been made by the women in choosing their own mates in the nearly sixteen hundred years which have elapsed since the right to propose was won for them by St. Bridget.

The popular legend as to the manner in which that right was gained goes this way:

One day as St. Patrick was walking along the shores of Lough Neagh, after having driven the frogs out of the bogs and the snakes out



"Go ahead and ask me"

of the grass, he was accosted by St. Bridget, who, in tears, told him of the dissension that had arisen among her women because of their inability to "pop the question." The kindly St. Patrick, greatly moved by her plea, thereupon established what has come to be known as Leap Year, fixing it as a period within which women would have the right to propose, but was greatly taken back when his petitioner—the rule of celibacy for priests being then not in force—immediately followed up her victory by making him a proposal of marriage.

St. Patrick declined the offer, but promised in palliation that, although he could not be the first to benefit by the new order, he would continue Leap Year as a permanent concession by which the women of all ages would be bettered in their desire to find suitable helpmeets.

The kindly efforts of the Irish

saint were successful so far as making Leap Year a permanent feature was concerned, but—and this is pointed to to-day by many women as indicating the chronic state of the masculine mind—so unwilling were the men from the very first to be partners to it that in several instances laws had to be passed to impress them with their obligations.

Became English Law

Record of one of these early laws, adopted in this case by an English hamlet, is still in existence, and reads:

"AN ACT TO AMEND THE LAWS OF COURTSHIP AND MATRIMONY.

"Albeit it is now become part of the common law in regard to social



relations of life, that as often as every bi-sexist year doth return, the ladies have the sole privilege of making love unto the men, which they doo either by words or looks as unto them seemeth proper; no man will be entitled to the benefit of the clergy who doth refuse to accept the offer of a lady, or who doth in any wise treat her proposal with neglect or contumely."

Scotland, too, found it necessary to enact punitive legislation as a means of reminding the men of their new duties toward the fair sex, and in 1288 wrote this law into its statute books:

"It is statut and ordaint that during the rein of her maiest blisset Margrete, for ilk yeare knowne as Lape Yeaere, ilk mayden ladye of both hiegh and lowe estate shall have liberte to bespeke ye man she likes, albeit he refuses to talk her to be his lawful wyfe, he shall be mulcted in ye sum an pundis or less, as his estate may be; except and awis if he

can make it appeare that he is betrothed and ither woman he then shall be free."

A few years afterward a like law was passed in France, and in the fifteenth century the custom of leap year was legalized in Genoa and France.

In modern days none of these laws has been enforced in any of the respective countries, and so women were thrown back on the methods which Bernard Shaw so sharply criticized in his book on the subject of matrimony.

Shaw, as has already been pointed out, insists that, leap year or no leap year, women always have been the aggressors in courtship, and that even though they may not go to the extent of making the definite proposal they have other ways of bringing about their ends which are equally effective.

"The pretense that women do not take the initiative is a farce," is the way Shaw puts it. "Why, the whole world is strewn with snares, traps, gins and pitfalls for the capture of men by women."

"Give the women the vote and in five years there will be a crushing tax on bachelors."

"It is assumed that the woman must wait, motionless, until she is wooed, and she does wait, motionless. But that is how the spider waits for the fly. The spider spins his web and if the fly shows a strength that promises to extricate him, how swiftly does she abandon



"The whole world is strewn with snares set by women," says Bernard Shaw

her pretense of passiveness and openly fling coil after coil about him until he is secured forever."

Of course, all this, though put with that engaging frankness which is typically Shavian, is beside the mark, for the problem now confronting womankind is that of making their proposals openly and frankly, instead of by the indirect method referred to by the English author, but it is worth putting down as showing how at least one eminent mind views the subject.

A Woman's View

Equally interesting is what some other authors have had to say on the question of women making proposals.

John Oliver Hobbes, who was Pearl Richards Craigie, a woman, considered the subject one of great importance, but treated it with facetiousness nevertheless.

"Should girls propose?" she asked in an article. "Could marriage with a man too cowardly to propose make her happy?" Then, after making caustic reference to "hulking fellows" being treated in leap year as though they were "delicate flowers, capricious zephyrs, sensitive plants or moping love birds," she concluded:

"If we allow—even for argument's sake—that it is for women to arrange marriage, all social life would be doomed to destruction."

Of course, she was writing satirically, and may have meant some of

this exactly opposite to what she wrote, but the very fact that she adopted this method of approaching the problem is accepted by many persons as demonstrating its vexatious nature, and as proving the unwillingness of a majority of people to go on record definitely for or against the innovation.

Others seek to complicate the situation still further by raising the question whether, indeed, even men themselves really propose outside of novels, at least to the extent to which they are credited, but obviously these persons are not concerned with the problem as to whether the women are to take advantage of their leap year privilege next year,



"I have the ballot and a pay envelope. Now, can I afford a husband?"

and, if they are, how best to go about it.

For, after all, if women are to be encouraged in making proposals the first question is to give them the opportunity, and the next is "How to go about it?"

The answer to the second question seems to be as difficult to obtain as to the first, and virtually the only sources of information are the playwrights. These craftsmen have not hesitated to offer solutions, but the trouble with them is that no two agree, and in many instances the methods suggested are not at all suited, in the opinion of many people, to practical needs.

An example in point is shown in a motion picture play which is now

being produced throughout the country.

In this production one of the women decides to apply the "direct method" in winning the man of her choice. Unfortunately for her plans, the man, an astrologer who is seeking an alliance of wealth rather than of love, centers his interest on the woman's niece, who, in addition to being very wealthy, is also very young and very pretty.

The fickleness of the object of her affections so incenses the woman that she has her niece incarcerated in a sanatorium for the feeble minded, but the astrologer, who is possessed of a great amount of determination, follows her there.

Not to be beaten so easily, the woman also goes to the asylum, and, although she meets with all sorts of difficulties, such as being mistaken

to look for a solution as providing a hint that, however the proposal may be made, a certain amount of persistence in some cases may be necessary.

A Stage Example

Another stage example of how else the proposal may be made was offered by J. Baldwin Blackstone in the three-act play in which the plot dealt directly with a leap year problem.

In this production the action is much more gentle, and is phrased in the politest of words. A young woman of wealth is desirous of forming a union in holy matrimony with a young man named Mr. Dimple, who, unfortunately, is in financial straits, and for that reason hesitates to ask her to be his wife. So she—her name is Miss O'Leary—approaches the subject this way:

Miss O'Leary—Ah, sir! There are times and seasons when the customs of society become reversed and ladies are allowed a latitude which at other periods are denied them. Mr. Dimple—Ah!

Miss O'Leary—And now, Mr. Dimple, I intend to take advantage of the privilege as regards myself.

Mr. Dimple—Oh, dear me, Miss O'Leary!

Miss O'Leary—I know you have long wished to meet with a heart that you could call your own.

Mr. Dimple—I confess I have had such thoughts—don't, don't let me say too much.

After that the rest is easy, and a happy marriage, which neither ever regrets, is the result.

Once again, it is pointed out, the method may not be exactly what is wanted to-day, but it furnishes a suggestion in the "art of leading up to the proposal" which, some consider, might prove helpful.

But these are by no means the only examples to be had, the stage abounding in plots which provide almost endless opportunity for study by women desirous of learning the best way of meeting their particular problem.

In New York City, for instance, one of the popular plays has in it a young man who is extremely shy in the presence of his loved one, although when with others he has no trouble at all about making love.

The young woman whom the young man really loves is everything that his heart desires, young, pretty and vivacious, but somehow whenever he is in her presence his courage forsakes him. There is a little complication which causes the young woman, entirely against her inclination, to engage herself to an adventurer who seeks to force her to marry him by holding over her head the threat of making public an alleged theft that had been committed by her brother while in his employ; but this is incidental to the real courtship, which is between her and the shy young man. He also is compelled to engage himself to another, but this, too, is extraneous, and merely holds in suspense the interest of the audience, and serves to keep the play going through the required number of acts.

Her Subtle Courtship

The way she finally wins him is this: First she tells all of her friends that she is in love with him and that she is certain he is in love with her. Then, whenever the opportunity offers, she sits beside him in the moonlight, although these opportunities are brief, as the young man, in his extreme nervousness, falls off the bench or makes a hasty exit into the night.

Finally she wins him by sheer weight of accumulative effect, and before he knows it he finds himself clasping her in his arms, and the curtain goes down on a very happy ending.

This method, especially that part of it which includes telling the man's friends that he is to be married before making the proposal to him direct, is considered by the experts to be "not so bad," and as offering a real helpful hint which, in the coming year, may be used to good effect by women seeking to take advantage of their opportunities during Leap Year.

These are all the helpful suggestions that could be gathered. As to whether any of them will be accepted, however, is a matter upon which no one will venture an opinion, and which probably because of the reticence usually displayed afterward in such matters will never be known.

The only thing that is known is that this Leap Year many men are perfectly willing for the women to try the experiment of making the proposals—on the condition, of course, they don't tell the men friends of their husbands afterward.

Forbes-Robertson on Art and Bolshevism

By Frances Fisher Byers

"BOLSHEVISM in art has forced its way by its inconsequence and vulgarity to some sort of recognition among certain classes. It is a manifestation of unhealthiness developed of late not only in painting but sculpture, music and in literature," declared Sir Johnston when I talked with him recently, aboard a Cunarder, on his first trip to this country since his retirement from the stage in 1915-16.

We had touched upon the labor question, spoken of the future of the Anglo-American alliance and the development of the drama, and then the conversation drifted to the subject of art, on which this greatest of Shakespearean actors can speak with authority, for, like Joseph Jefferson, had he not given his life to a histrionic career he would have been equally famous as a master of portraiture.

His leisure time has always been devoted to his painting, and several of his canvases, including his portraits of Ellen Terry, Mary Anderson and Samuel Phelps, the great actor, which now hangs in the Gar-

rick Theater in London, and the famous church scene from "Much Ado About Nothing," which was a commission from Sir Henry Irving, are considered by authoritative critics to be notable works of art. He has recently finished a portrait of Anthony Hope at his studio in his home on Bedford Square, London, the historic spot which a celebrated humorist once described as "bounded on the north by Forbes-Robertson, on the east by Weedon Grossmith, on the south by Anthony Hope and on the west by Lady Monckton."

"If all the horrible things we see exhibited," continued Sir Johnston—"mere bald sketches, crude and distorted—are to be looked upon as fine art, what about Sargent, Rembrandt, Velazquez, Sir Joshua Reynolds, to name a few of the masters at random? Both can't be right. Of course, this craze for violent forms and colors really does not amount to anything," he went on earnestly, "but it is a pity to see people even temporarily influenced by these extravagant and abnormal things."

"These cubists and futurists and other cults of weird origin and names are all wild nonsense. They are all part of a movement—a morbid craze to get attention by using desperate methods. The originators would rather be execrated than ignored," he added, with an amused

smile. "These so-called 'periods' or schools of art are entirely ephemeral. I've lived through dozens of them," he added, tolerantly; "a few leave faint, very faint, impressions behind, and nothing more. Their creed seems to be, 'For Heaven's sake, let us see how ugly we can make this man or this woman or this object'—as the case may be. They are destructive and not constructive, and, therefore, cannot live. Their efforts are but 'sprinkled along the waste of years,' to quote Keble.

"The Bakst ideas are clever," he went on, "but so extravagant as to border on the ridiculous. Exaggeration never appeals to me, because it always gives me the feeling that the artist is seeking the ugly instead of the beautiful."

Speaking of scenic art, he said: "We have wonderful scenic artists on both sides of the Atlantic, although the tendency is to paint too forcefully in order to make a strong background, and when this is the case the actors are overwhelmed, so to speak; or, rather, the audience is distracted from the actors by the background. The French lead the world in this phase of art. They consistently treat a scene merely as a background which will throw up the figures instead of obscuring them. French artists invariably and constantly keep in mind that the scene must always be a background and

nothing more and must not obtrude to the detriment of the actors."

"So many times I have noticed that American and English artists think only of painting the scene for their own sake. Sometimes it is too strongly done, and again if too weak has the same effect. I remember," he continued, "upon one occasion taking my eldest daughter to the Russian ballet, I was distressed to find a tendency to trade on certain grotesque contortions; to discover scenery of a puerile nature which conveyed nothing to my mind but incompetence in regard to the scene. I regretted to see this evidence of a bad influence, because formerly I had enjoyed the exquisite work of Pavlova and Mordkin."

It is interesting to recall that the daughter of whom Sir Johnston spoke is the eldest of four and is eighteen years old. She is named for her aunt, Maxine Elliott, who is Lady Robertson's sister. The younger Maxine or Maxine Mary Frances, to give her her full name, is a beautiful and accomplished girl, and having inherited much of the artistic ability of her distinguished father, as well as the critical faculty of her grandfather, John Forbes-Robertson, one of the noted art critics and journalists of his day, she is now being educated in one of the art schools of Paris.

Continuing the subject of scenic art, which logically would be

great interest to one who has been so notably identified with the stage for more than thirty years, Sir Johnston declared, with characteristic vigor: "When I go to the theater and expect to look upon a scene which is supposed to represent a forest, or a sylvan glade, or a blasted heath, I don't want to see quantities of rags that look like nothing more than dishcloths dipped in dirty water, twisted, or rolled, or draped, which cannot, either under the lights or by the wildest stretch of imagination, be made to create the proper illusion. Such effort does not carry out the idea of the dramatist or the poet, as the case may be."

"If the author indicates that the actors should move across a moor or through a glade, realistic scenery should be painted to represent as nearly as possible the trees, shrubbery, etc. Get the scene as near as possible to nature. All distortions and ridiculous substitutes show a craving for notoriety which is almost a disease."

Growing reminiscent at this point, he went on: "My portrait of Samuel Phelps was a labor of love. He was my master in the early days and a great actor in every sense of the word. The church scene from 'Much Ado About Nothing,' which is entirely biographical, every figure in it being the portrait of an actor or actress, even the super-

numeraries being people I knew, was a commission from Sir Henry Irving. I might mention, too," he added, smiling whimsically, "that the money from this picture started my first bank account, many years ago, at the beginning of my career. When the picture was finished Sir Henry insisted upon giving me double the amount agreed upon. This I returned, and he again sent me the same sum, which I sent back once more, only to have him insist that I accept it."

"The best schools for the development of the young artist are undoubtedly in Paris," he continued, "but everywhere, both in England and America as well, more encouragement is given the student and far greater opportunities than in my day. While decadent movements in art do exist, and always will, to a certain extent, I suppose, still the general trend is upward. Many treasures of inestimable value have been destroyed or injured. Many lives have been sacrificed that would have enriched the world. The unspeakable Hun did his best to destroy all that was beautiful and true, but out of the ashes of the great conflagration the world is rising, phoenix-like, with a new vision, which embraces art in its highest conception."

All of which goes to show that Forbes-Robertson, like all great constructive artists, is a born optimist.